SOUTHERN PINE FORESTRY NOTES

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
SOUTHERN PINE ASSOCIATION

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No. 24 BARK BEETLES IN RELATION TO SELECTIVE CUTTING

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The Southern Pine beetle generally has been absent, or present in only small numbers, in the Gulf region during recent years. This insect, as an adult, makes a long S-shaped gallery in the cambium, or inner bark, of pine trees. In control work it is necessary to fell the trees, bark the logs and burn the bark.

Most of the damage done to pine trees is caused by Ips engraver beetles. As in the case of the Southern Pine beetle, the first evidence of attack is the presence of pitch tubes along the trunk, or spots of reddish boring dust or sawdust in the bark crevices, or a slight change in the color of the foliage. In control operations it is only necessary to fell the trees and bark them. Burning the bark is not necessary.

Care should be taken in selective logging operations that as few as possible of the trees to be left as a residual stand be bruised in felling the crop trees or in removing the logs from the woods. Fire should not be permitted to scorch the trunks of the trees. Ordinarily during logging operations these beetles are not a menace. It is only when large-scale operations stop suddenly that they become injurious to standing timber. In general, summer cutting can be carried on without danger of infestation by bark beetles. However, when there is a deficiency of rainfall of one inch or more below normal during the growing season (March-October) summer cutting is not advisable and during periods of drought control operations are useless. With the resumption of normal weather, the infestations will cease.

As a rule, no control measures are recommended for infested trees occurring singly or in small numbers. If the trees die in large groups, felling and barking or barking and burning the infested trees is recommended, except as noted above. If the identity of bark beetles is in doubt one will receive prompt information as to whether the Southern Pine beetle or the Ips engraver beetle is involved by sending a specimen of the bark to the Southern Forest Experiment Station, New Orleans, La.

In view of the present status of these bark beetles, care must be taken in control operations that the trees that are actually infested are removed. Often trees with needles turned brown or red have been abandoned by the insects. In general, the condition of the inner bark, or cambium, at the base of the trees is a much surer guide than the condition of the needles or whether the top of the tree is dead or not, since some of the leaf-eating beetles through feeding cause the needles to die and make it appear that the trees are attacked by bark beetles and are dying when in reality such is not the case.

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